2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

when questioned, 'I am grinding here because I want to eat here. My heart is angry because my grandmother keeps scolding me.' A boy of 12 in another village seemed to be more assiduous than his fellows in fetching firewood. When I commented on his behaviour I was told, apparently as a quite sufficient explanation, that the child had left his own home in a neighbouring village because he did not like his mother's new husband. He had come to live with a more distant relation—a classificatory sister's husband—instead. With this more remote kinsman he evidently felt the need to ingratiate himself in order to establish his claim for support. The Bemba kinship system allows such great freedom of movement to young people that temporary changes of this kind from one eating group to another are quite frequent.[1] Thus the whole principle of the exchange of work for food is learnt as a practical expedient by children not yet in their teens, and it is on these reciprocal obligations to serve and to feed that the whole political and economic system of the tribe is based.

Organized Forms of Labour.

Outside the kinship group there are other recognized forms of labour. In the old days these included the institution of slavery by which a chief or notable acquired rights over the life and labour of men or women, and in return fed and protected them, and provided for their marriage and the upbringing of their children. Slaves, whether captives taken in battle (*ba mabuta*, i.e. of the bow), or Bemba deprived of liberty as a legal punishment, or given as compensation for some irreparable injury such as murder (*ba musoka*) or destruction of gardens,[2] lived as members of the owner's household group, sleeping in their own huts, but fed by him, and not possessing gardens or granaries of their own. No one would know the difference between a slave and a poor relative, I was told, except that the former worked harder and only ate the food left over by the household. Although slavery no longer exists, the

[1] The Bemba touchiness and readiness to detect criticism or slight is shown in childhood. Children who consider that they have been corrected over-harshly announce that they do not 'like' the offending relative any more, and it is not uncommon to say of a small boy of 10 or 12 that he does not like his father (*tatemwa kuli wishi*) and for him to move elsewhere for a time. His kinship system and type of housing makes it very possible for him to follow such inclinations.

[2] Or persons voluntarily enslaved *na kulila*, i.e. usually after having been irreparably insulted.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

institution is worth mentioning as an example of a permanent relationship of exchange of food for labour, and as illustrating in an extreme case the Bemba concept that rights over labour include rights over movement, residence, and life and death.[1] The memory of this institution, still very much alive to-day, certainly affects the attitude of black to white and the ideas of service the older men at any rate are prepared to accept.

Another form of organized labour is the custom known as *ukupula* by which a man or a woman, but usually the latter, can offer service to a householder temporarily, most commonly at a busy time of the year such as harvest. In return he or she gets food, either in the form of a share of the family dish, or a basket of the grain that is being reaped. In such cases the employer is either a distant kinsman who would not be otherwise under any strong obligation to help, or he is no relative at all. The worker is considered to be in an inferior position and spoken of contemptuously or pityingly, as we might of a beggar.[2] Actually, the woman who goes *ukupula* may do exactly the same work as one of the near relatives of the family, and may be given much the same food, but she does not receive what she does by right of kinship, and the phrase *Alepula-pula-fye*, which might be translated, 'she lives by picking up casual jobs', is usually uttered with a rather scornful shrug of the shoulders. Only an absolutely destitute person or an imbecile would reckon to subsist in this way as a regular thing;[3] but as a temporary form of support, *ukupula* has become very common lately as one of the means by which the very large percentage of deserted wives can eke out an existence during the bad times of the year. Travellers returning from the mines, who can no longer reckon to be fed on the march as in the old days, also resort to the practice on occasion. I have seen them do an afternoon's hoeing on their arrival at one of the villages on the main road in order to secure an evening meal.

Another type of service rewarded by cooked food is the communal work done by a man in return for beer. Such working-bees,

[1] A chief could sell a slave to Arab traders, known as *ukuposa* 'to throw away'. A commoner could not do this, but a *nalume* could enslave his *muipwa* in compensation for some legal fault of his own.

[2] *Ukupula* is often loosely applied to all forms of scrounging, but technically speaking means labour in return for food only. *Ukulomba* means to beg in the sense of asking a favour from a superior, such as a chief or an ancestral spirit, with no possibility of adequate return.

[3] The type of person who would have probably become voluntarily enslaved in the old days.

The Cultural Setting

593 604 With this system of matrilineal descent the ties between a woman and her brother are very close. The woman produces children who are the heirs of her brothers. The man is the natural guardian of his sisters' children, and he must be consulted about his uterine niece's marriage and could claim the right to marry her where he pleased. He could protect her after her marriage if he wished to do so. The mother's brother could generally claim possession of his sister's children if her marriage broke down. In the old days he could give one of the children as a slave or a blood-wite to the head of a family to whom he or one of the lineage group owed reparation. He could command the services of his sister's son and bid him follow him to war. The woman in her turn could command the services of her brother's daughter and was thought to be able to bless or curse the fertility of the latter's marriage. Brother and sister can take each other's property and behave in a free and easy way with each other.

[567] [789]

591 171 596 Marriage is uxorilocal among the Bemba and among kindred tribes such as the Bisa, Lala, Lamba, Cewa, and Kaonde which also perform a kind of chisungu ceremony. A young man who marries goes to live in his wife's village where he builds himself a hut and becomes a member of her extended family. This is a domestic and economic unit. The sons-in-law work together under the father-in-law and the daughters with their mother. The man gives service to his father-in-law rather than cattle or other goods as in most other Bantu societies. A young couple has no cooking fire of its own to begin with. The girl cooks with her mother and sends food to her husband at the man's shelter, where he sits with his friends. At first the couple have no granary of their own and no gardens and when they acquire the latter, later in their married life, the gardens are cleared near those of the rest of the extended family group.

[606]

596 621 As a family group of this kind grows in size, its head often chooses to separate from the old village and to start a new one of his own. Hence the desire of a Bemba to have many daughters in order to be able 'to found a house'.

591 After the marriage has been established, and children have been born to the union, it remains a question for individual decision whether the husband is given permission to remove his

5:Slaski E-4 (no date) 1950 FQ5 Bemba FQ5
Luapula Peoples

South Africa Company and were given courts in 1924. 622

LEGAL SYSTEM

In the past the judicial officer at the capital was the Musumancita.(1) 681
An appeal from his decisions could be made to the Kazembe.(2) The *mofi* (poison-cup ordeal) was administered to the accused man by his nearest relative.(3) The penalty for witchcraft was always death.(4) Adultery, homicide and theft were punished by death, amputation of limbs or genitals, or sale into slavery.(5) Travellers commented on the number of natives, even among the court officials, with mutilated hands and cropped ears.(6) [732]
Within the *cikoto* homicide seems to have been compoundable.

LAND

The conquered Shila continued to be recognised by the Lunda as the 311
owners of the land, and were consulted when fresh land was wanted for settlement. At present all suitable land in the immediate vicinity of villages 423
is under cultivation but there remains a sufficiency of uncultivated land farther away.

SLAVERY

Slaves, sold to Arab and Swahili traders, were mostly recruited from 567 ●
among convicted criminals.(7) Livingstone gives this as the reason for Manyuema's reluctance to purchase Kazembe slaves.(8)

OTHER CULTURAL FEATURES

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS, DRESS etc.

"The people are black, dolichocephalic, woolly-headed, thin-lipped, of 141
medium stature."(9) The intermingling of tribes has tended to eliminate 142
differences of physical type. Facial scarification and tattooings, once 304
distinctive tribal marks, have become mere fanciful embellishments. Chipping of the upper front teeth is now rare.

On ceremonial and ritual occasions in the past the body was smeared 302
with *apemba*(10) (a white chalky substance extracted from the river bed) and 291
the hair, worn long and plaited or made into a knob,(11) was powdered with *nkula* (reddish wood-dust).(12) Rubbing earth on arms and breast was a token of the respect due to chiefs.(13) The dress consisted of a bark-cloth skirt, *nyanda*,(14) or a cotton loin-cloth.(15)

(1) Gamitto, II, p.18.
(2) ibid.
(3) Holmes, p.35.
(4) Burton, p.129.
(5) ibid, p.40.
(6) Livingstone, I, p.248.
(7) Livingstone, I, pp.302-3; II, p.62.
(8) ibid., II, pp.29, 35.
(9) Valdez II, p.241.
(10) Burton, p.103; Gamitto, I, p.307.
(11) Livingstone, I, p.263.
(12) Burton, p.82.
(13) ibid., pp.45, 112; Valdez, II, p.227.
(14) Valdez, op.cit., p.219.
(15) Burton, p.127.

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

554 565 royal princesses are also entitled to honour, as well as those of wives of chiefs and even consorts of princesses. It will be seen, therefore, that the royal rank is a very large one. Any one who can possibly claim connexion of any sort with any chief, dead or living, does so, although the perquisites of rank are in most cases honour only and the possible favours of the chief, rather than any material assets. Every one outside the royal clan, or *ulupwa*, is an *umupabi*, or 'ordinary person', and in old days there was a slave class below—men and women captured in battle or enslaved to their own people for some crime. These individuals were known [578 as *bashya*. The term is now used as an opprobrious epithet ●567] especially for foreigners—often assumed to have been enslaved by the Bemba formerly. Slavery itself no longer exists.

561 (4) *Other Principles of Social Grouping*. Age is not a principle of social grouping among the Bemba. Precedence is reckoned on the basis of seniority, as in most Bantu societies, and there are special terms used to describe the different stages of life, suckling, infant, child, adolescent, unmarried, married, old, &c. But there [891] are no regiments based on age, as in South and parts of East Africa, and the boys initiation ceremonies so often found associated with such institutions do not exist among this group of the Central Bantu.

571 There are no occupational groups, with the exception of certain specialist fishing communities on the banks of the big rivers, and in the old days there were specialist hunters of big game. Secret societies, such as the *ubutwa*, which is common among neighbouring tribes over the Congo border, and has been adopted by the Bisa of the swamps, do not seem to have been introduced among the Bemba.

105 To conclude, Bemba society is as yet undifferentiated to any large extent. The tribe is an outgrowth of a lineage-group which has occupied its present territory for 200 to 300 years, and has remained more or less homogeneous. The original kinship structure is still apparent. All the social groups to which a man belongs are ultimately based on kinship—whether it is his household village or descent group, and there are no other forms of association such as age-sets to cut across this original grouping by descent. Rank consists of membership of the clan of the first immigrants to enter the land.

(*c*) *Economic Background*. The Bemba are an agricultural people

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

622 701 although he did not necessarily take part in the fighting. As one chief put it, 'If we were killed, the whole *icalo* would fall to pieces'. The ruler had certain military captains in his following, could call up men to fight, direct their operations from afar, and arrange for the performance of war magic for success before battle and for purification from the stain of blood after it.

622 651 The prerogatives of a chief consist in rights over the labour of his people, who are required to do a few days' tribute labour each year and to answer sudden calls for help if made; and also claims to tribute in kind, usually paid in the form of an annual present of beer and/or grain, and portions of animals killed in the hunt.[1] It is through this tribute that he is able to pay his advisers, servants, labourers—and soldiers in the old days. Formerly, he maintained rights to certain monopolies, such as ivory tusks, salt from the big inland deposits at Mpika, and guns and cloth traded [567] from Arabs. Slaves or booty captured by the army were brought to him, and he had a number of his own people enslaved for various offences. Besides these economic prerogatives, he commanded great, one might almost say abject deference, and had the satisfaction of seeing his following grow, his authority increased, and his power over life and death over his subjects recognized.

622 The sanctions for a chief's authority are numerous, and they were still greater in the old days. The most important of these has already been described as the people's belief in their rulers descent from a long line of ancestors and the supernatural powers thought to be so conferred. Besides this, a reputation for generosity and a system by which advancement could only be attained through [687] royal favour naturally bound people to him. Much of his power also rested in the old days on force. A chief practised savage mutilations on those who offended him, injured his interests, laughed at him or members of his family, or stole his wives. A number of these mutilated men and women still survive in Bemba country to-day. Command over the army and over the supply of guns also lay in the chief's hands and there is no doubt that the greatness of the *Bena panda* rested to a large extent on fear. The people explain that the royal family were named after the crocodile because 'they are like crocodiles that seize hold of the common people and tear them to bits with their teeth'.

[1] All these dues are very much harder to exact nowadays (cf. p. 116).